(a) the number of employment exchanges in the country at present;

(b) the number of unemployed persons registered in these exchanges; and

(c) the number of unemployed persons provided with the jobs during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYEMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO): (a) At present 947 employment exchanges are functioning in the country.

(b) Around 4.05 crore jobseekers, all of whom are not necessarily unemployed, are registered with these exchanges as on 31.12.2004.

(c) Placements effected by the employment exchanges during 2002, 2003 and 2004 were around 1.43 lakh, 1.55 lakh and 1.38 lakh respectively.

Scheme for welfare of handloom weavers

4574. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the EPF and PF Act, 1952 with reference to the handloom sector;

(b) whether Government of Karnataka has requested to exempt Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation from the purview of EPF and PF Act, 1952, as the State has evolved a near identical scheme for the welfare of the handloom weavers; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO): (a) The Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 is applicable to the industries engaged in manufacture of textiles and employing 20 or more employees. The handloom sector falls under the scheduled head "Textiles" and hence the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 is applicable to the handloom sector as well.

(b) The Government of Karnataka has sought exemption only to the weaver workers of the Corporation from the purview of the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.

(c) The request of the State Government was examined and it was found that their case does not qualify for exclude a few workers of an establishment from the purview of Act. Moreover, the welfare benefits proposed to weaver workers are not comparable to the benefit available under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.

Special industries for women

4575. SHRI A. VIJAYRAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the decision that women workers are provided opportunities to work at night has been debated widely or examined by Indian Labour Conference;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, whether steps would be taken for the same;

(d) whether any decision is taken regarding the "Special Industries" in which women would be demanded to work night shifts,

(e) if so, the details of such industries,

(f) whether any rules are formulated for additional safeguards relating to physical security, transport, health and occupational safety before allowing women to work at night;

(g) if so, the details thereof; and

(h) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K CHANDRASEKHAR RAO): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Three meetings with the representatives of the employers and the trade union organizations were held in the past before it was decided to amend Section 66 of the Factories Act, 1948 to allow employment of women workers between 7.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m.